

State assessment results show more students proficient in math and English

More Delaware students are participating in statewide mathematics and English language arts (ELA) assessments, and more students are proficient in these subjects, according to preliminary 2017 state assessment results for grades 3 to 8 and high school.

Delaware's participation rate in the state's Smarter assessment increased from 98 percent in 2016 to 99 percent this year in both ELA and mathematics. The overall state proficiency in math is 45 percent this year – up 1 percentage point from last year and up 3 points from 2015. With more students testing, the number of students on track to college and career readiness in math increased more than 1,300 this year from last year and more than 3,500 since Delaware established its Smarter baseline in 2015. The most significant gains this year were in mathematics in grades 5, 6 and 7.

“Last year as a state we recognized the need to focus on middle school mathematics and, therefore, provided targeted professional learning and resources to our districts and schools. I am excited to see the progress in this area, which results from the hard work of our students and educators,” Secretary of Education Susan Bunting said.

For example, the Department of Education provided supports to middle school math teachers by developing a Mathematics Curriculum Academy. The professional learning opportunity guides math teachers and leaders as they develop high-quality lessons to use in their classrooms. The instructional units they created are now available to educators statewide, and the academy continues to support math teachers across districts.

Last year the department also established Reimagining Professional Learning grants to support the work of districts and charters committed to improving the quality of professional learning for Delaware teachers. Grants were given to districts and charters based on plans in English/language arts, mathematics, and literacy.

Milford took an innovative approach with the grants, applying them to improve math outcomes across all elementary schools in the district. Superintendent Kevin Dickerson credits the leadership and commitment of the elementary teaching staff and the dedication of more time to focus on math instructional strategies for students as part of the reason why the district saw a 7-point increase in math proficiency this year.

“The grant helped empower our elementary teachers with having deeper, more-focused conversations concerning math instruction and student math performance throughout the school year,” said Dickerson. “As a result, our teachers and school administrators are really doing outstanding work in analyzing how to best meet individual student needs and are having a lot of intense conversations in PLCs (professional learning communities) and in staff meetings focused on mathematical instruction and achievement, particularly in the area of number sense.”

In ELA, Delaware scores dipped slightly by 1 percentage point to 54 percent and increased 2 points from the 2015 baseline. Despite the slight dip in overall performance, Delaware has more students who rated “proficient” or “advanced.” This year, approximately 300 more students are on track to college and career readiness in ELA in grades 3 to 8 than last year, and nearly 2,600 more students have achieved this level of ELA proficiency since 2015.

Laurel Middle School, one of Delaware’s priority schools, saw large gains in both ELA and math across all grades. In math, Laurel Middle went up 11 points since last year and has gone

up 24 points since 2015. In ELA, Laurel has gained 19 percentage points since 2015

Shawn Larrimore, superintendent of the Laurel School District, credits their overarching belief in people, practices, and performance for their success.

“We recruit the best people and then we do our best to develop them to be even better,” said Larrimore. “We don’t focus on test prep. We focus on the standards and then deliver them via research-based practices – strategies that are proven to increase student achievement. And finally, we regularly analyze how we’re performing—including loads of walkthrough data—and meet to discuss how we can do better.

Dr. Rick Evans and his staff at Laurel Middle School exemplify our district mission of People, Practices, and Performance.”

In SAT, the state’s accountability test for high school, this year’s results reflect a larger student population than in previous years due to a change in business rules. Nearly 900 more students participated in the SAT this year than in 2016. While overall state proficiency in the SAT evidence-based reading and writing (ERW) assessment held steady at 53 percent this year – the same percent proficient as last year – 516 additional students are now demonstrating college and career readiness. In math, while 29 percent of students demonstrated proficiency this year compared to 31 percent in 2016, 52 more students are now college and career ready than were last year.

It is important to note that today’s score release is distinct from the College Board release in September. In that annual release, the College Board reports on graduating class data. Today’s release by the state reflects the scores of the incoming Class of 2018.

Also released today were statewide scores for the Delaware Comprehensive Assessment System (DCAS) Science exam,

administered in grades 5, 8 and 10, and the DCAS-Alt, which is administered to students with severe cognitive disabilities. For DCAS Science, Delaware saw an overall 2-point decline in both grade 5 and grade 8 and maintained in grade 10. Delaware is transitioning to a new science assessment system this year to align more closely to the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) taught in Delaware classrooms. The new assessment will begin field testing in the upcoming school year.

For DCAS-Alt, results varied. Students taking the DCAS-Alt1 have specific needs within each grade so that year-to-year comparisons are more challenging. In grades 6 to 8, Delaware saw an increase from 64 percent to 65 percent in reading and a 6-point increase from 60 percent to 66 percent in math. All other grade bands were down from last year.

The state did not administer a social studies exam this year. A new assessment will launch in the 2017-18 school year.

For more information on State of Delaware assessment results, review the [2017 data charts](#) and [Delaware's Executive Summary](#).

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